World Health Assembly, Geneva, 18-26 May 2015

Provisional agenda point 17.5 Global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property

There is indeed a need for a global strategy and plan of action on public health. To link such a strategy to innovation and intellectual property is interesting. However, the current global strategy and plan of action is all about intellectual property and very little about the wider issues of innovation and public health. You may therefore wish to consider to revise both the innovation and the public health parts of it, or simply change the name and promise that you will also develop a strategy and outline the much needed action and innovation that reflect the role of public health in a rapidly changing globalised world.

Dear Madame Director-General, we need a serious global debate on the role of public health and we have promised you to assist you in steering this. We have engaged our over 100 national public health associations, and are currently discussing the new roles we have to assume, and the needed changes within our constituencies with regard to education and recruitment of public health personnel.

What we know already: We need people trained in intersectoral work, in health in all policies, in global health diplomacy. Public health needs to be fully integrated within health systems. Having IHR functions and surveillance and monitoring functions apart from health systems - we all have learned this during the Ebola crisis - has aggravated the weakness of the health systems in the three affected countries.

We call on you, Member States, to lead a much needed debate within your countries on what sort of public health you need and want. And we call on you to bring this debate to a future session of the Assembly.

We need a global strategy and plan of action on public health that really deserves this title. We are about to finalise a comprehensive and flexible “Global Framework for Public Health” to strengthen public health services and health security. This should be used as one of the information documents when tabling this agenda item in the future.